



WNews

Wentworth Community Housing Tenant Newsletter
Issue 45 | September 2020

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the Spring edition of WNews! It's so nice to see the flowers blooming and to enjoy warm, mild days in the sun after the cold winter. In this edition, I have some exciting news to share with you.

Wentworth Community Housing has formed a close working relationship with another community housing provider based in Northern Sydney, named Link Housing. This close partnership has led to our two organisations deciding to merge to become one larger organisation, Link Wentworth Housing, so that we can build more new homes and provide better, expanded services to you over the coming years.

I will also take this opportunity to let you know that for personal reasons I have opted not to continue a full-time executive career and did not take part in interviews for the new CEO role. I'm delighted to let you know that the new organisation will be led by Andrew McAnulty, the current CEO of Link

Housing. Andrew has extensive experience in the community housing sector in both Australia and the UK, and like myself, is deeply committed to providing safe and secure housing to our tenants. I will continue as CEO of Wentworth until the new organisation starts on 31 March 2021.

I invite you to read more about this merger in the attached insert where you will find a diagram showing the benefits of the merger, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Contact details are also provided if you have any further questions or would like to know more.

In other exciting news, as we head into the warmer months, I am pleased to let you know that Wentworth has received a grant from the NSW Government to develop a project, the Western Sydney Heat and Social Housing Project. The project team will work closely with our tenants and other organisations, to

develop a range of resources to help tenants in times of extreme heat.

I know many of our tenants are doing great things in their communities. In this edition, we are excited to share Allison's story with you. Allison has been working hard to help promote women's empowerment and promote healthy female relationships.

Finally, I'm very pleased to announce the launch of our brand-new website. Developed with input from some of our tenants and staff it is designed to be user-friendly and easy to navigate. Visit www.wentworth.org.au and let us know what you think.

Enjoy your reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen McIntyre".

Stephen McIntyre
Chief Executive Officer



Meet Allison Disbray

- **Business Owner, Knot On**
- **Founder, Sister Act Initiative**
- **Tenant, Wentworth Community Housing**

Allison Disbray is a multi-talented business owner and creative thinker. She is currently putting her energy and passion into a campaign to help promote women's empowerment and promote healthy female relationships.

I have my own art and craft business, Knot On. I design and make macramé hangers, wall art and jewellery which is sold online on Facebook, Instagram and our website www.knoton.com.au. My youngest daughter designed our Logo and the Logo for Sister Act. I left my previous career as a bookkeeper to care for my eldest daughter, who was

diagnosed with a rare chronic illness when she was 13. My daughters are now 16 and 23.

As the saying goes, hard times reveal true friends. When my daughter was first diagnosed, my mum was dying of cancer. Our life was in turmoil. I tried to persevere with working and achieving my career goals, but my daughter's condition became worse, we had sunk into depression. Because her condition is rare, the "specialists" were extremely unhelpful. It's an indescribable pain watching your child suffer like that and not being able to do anything to help them. She's one tough cookie.

Our recovery has taken a long time, during which we have lived through long periods of isolation, loneliness, unemployment, sickness and worry. Those friends I thought I had, just slowly but surely disappeared, many of which were long standing friendships. I wish them well though. I really could have used a Sister at that time in my life. When you go through experiences like this, you learn some hard lessons.

Over the COVID period, I have taken the opportunity to do some free TAFE courses offered by the NSW government, in social media and marketing. Part of the course involved putting together an online survey. Mine was directed at women, and based on the

question: "Do you have trouble saying 'no'?" The results of the survey stunned me.

From this, I was motivated to put together the Sister Act Initiative. Each week I post on my social media accounts, asking for people to nominate a woman who has shown them kindness or support. Any sort of positive, selfless act could be included. Random acts of kindness done silently, is something I value greatly. That is why I ask all who nominate someone to send me their details in my inbox rather than publicly naming them. The person who is nominated the most, in one years' time (1 September 2021) will receive a prize and a plaque/trophy (I'm looking for sponsors for this!), to reward them for being a supportive Sister. Down the track we will also be selling merchandise on our website to promote this.

Setting up a new career that could support us and fit in with caring for my daughter also gave me a creative place which helped me to get through a very tough time. I find both art and nature relaxing, they take your mind off bad things.

Rent statements

Your most up to date rent statement will be sent to you by separate mail. If you have any questions or want to know your account balance, you can call us on **02 4777 8000** or email admin@wentworth.org.au and we'll be happy to assist.



Project to build resilience to heatwaves

Dealing with episodes of extreme heat in Western Sydney is a growing concern for people living in the region.



Heatwaves can especially affect vulnerable community members, including the elderly. Wentworth is working with other Western Sydney housing providers and local councils in a new project which aims to help residents to stay safe and well during heatwaves.

This project is a collaboration between several organisations and is funded by a \$30,000 grant from the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. Known as the Western Sydney Heat and Social Housing project, it will develop a range of resources to reduce household vulnerability in extreme heat. Tenants will be directly involved in the design of these resources, to make sure that what is produced will be most helpful to them and we are starting workshops soon.

This year, we saw the hottest recorded day in Penrith, at 48.9 degrees on January 4. Urban heat is becoming a priority for all levels of government to consider, especially at planning stages. Wentworth's concern is with our tenants' experiences of increasing urban heat, and in finding ways to make sure they are ready for heatwaves.

Wentworth is also involved in two other climate change resilience projects, in partnership with Western Sydney University and Infrastructure NSW. It is our hope that, by working together with different organisations and industries, we will be able to do things that work best for the people most impacted by extreme heat living in Western Sydney.

Other partners in the Western Sydney Heat and Social Housing project are Evolve Housing, Hume Community Housing, Penrith City Council, Hawkesbury City Council and Western Sydney University.

If you'd like more information or would like to be involved, please contact Vanessa Tomas on Vanessa.tomas@wentworth.org.au or **02 4777 8078**.

Postcards from Home

A new initiative from Penrith City Council offers a way to express some of the experiences people are going through during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Postcards from Home is a creative way of sharing thoughts, feelings and processes people have been through at this time, and to connect with others.

One of the most difficult aspects to COVID-19 has been periods of isolation. For many people, this has meant a huge disruption to daily routines. For others, separation from friends and loved ones has meant increased feelings of loneliness.

A tenant of Wentworth, Karen Reybourn* shared her postcard, pictured. Karen's postcard gives a sense of change and recovery. Her words show her personal approach to recognising hard times and staying attuned to positive changes, when things start to get better.

Postcards from Home invites people living, working or passing through St Marys and nearby suburbs to put some of those experiences down. Anyone can take part and you can write whatever

you want. The idea is to capture a sense of what it has been like for people living through this unusual time.

You can view the postcards on Instagram @PostcardsFromHomeArchive

Postcards from Home is a Penrith City Council Magnetic Places project.



*Not her real name.

Staying on top of your rent

Paying your rent is key to keeping your home.



There are many reasons why people get behind in their rent. Running a household and managing a budget can be a challenge. Expenses can creep up at different times of the year, putting pressure on funds and adding stress.

With the festive season just around the corner, many of us start to think about gift-giving and celebrations, which can get expensive. However, there are lots of different ways to give that don't stretch the budget. Keep an eye out for some upcycling, recycling and handmade ideas, as well as tips to plan ahead, so you don't fall behind.

Financial health means that you are on top of your commitments, but you don't have to get there alone. In the coming weeks we will share resources and suggestions for how you can get ideas and support. A budget refresh can help to clarify your priorities - starting with keeping your rent up to date.

News for Wentworth Tenants about services and COVID-19

COVID-19 has changed the world we live in – while we are settling into a “new normal”, we are still a long way from beating this virus.

As we write this article, we are reminded that COVID-19 is still in our midst and that community transmission remains a very real risk. Recent cases in Penrith and the Blue Mountains, are a reminder that this virus can emerge anywhere, at any time.

Due to continuing community transmission of the virus, Wentworth is taking a very cautious approach to the way we provide services to keep our clients, staff and the community safe. Through technology, we have effectively mobilised our systems so that we can provide you with services without the need to come into our offices.

Wentworth offices will continue to be closed to tenants, **but remember, even though our**

offices are closed, we are still open for service, and you can phone us on 4777 8000 between 8:30am and 4:30pm or email us at admin@wentworth.org.au

Having a secure home now is more important than ever.

We want to make sure that you can sustain your home. Continuing to pay your rent is a really important step in keeping your home. We are aware that JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments will reduce soon for those receiving these payments.

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or concerned you may have difficulties when government payments are reduced, please talk to your Client Service Officer as soon as possible. They will work

with you to see if we can find a solution. We want to help you avoid owing money for rent.

Things are changing fast and keeping up to date with all the regulations can be a challenge.

With the situation changing day by day, the following link is a great resource to help you find out what you can and can't do: www.healthdirect.gov.au/covid19-restriction-checker

We are committed to keeping you informed of any changes at Wentworth.

We continue to monitor what is happening with the pandemic and are currently reviewing our plans to decide when will be a safe time to open up our offices and some face-to-face services. We will be in contact with you with as soon as there are any changes to our services.

Keep looking after yourself and your loved ones as we all remain committed to being COVID- safe.

Our new website is now live

We are very pleased to announce the launch of our brand-new website. After a detailed design process - which included testing with both tenants and staff – our new layout is more user-friendly, and easier to navigate. There are several features that will help more visitors to find the information they need - including audio-accessible options and a simplified menu.

The website upgrade means that the most important information is now available in one place, with clear links to where you can go to find out more. The drop-down menus contain sections for support services, tenants, community and current projects.

Please take a look at www.wentworth.org.au and let us know what you think. We would love your feedback!



Spring visits

Over spring, some of our staff will be visiting Wentworth housing complexes to talk to tenants. Keep an eye out for a visit near you. They are there to listen to you and will have some goodies bags to give away as well!





**OUT OF HOURS
EMERGENCY
MAINTENANCE LINE
02 4777 8000
(choose option 1)**

Head office

Penrith

Address: Borec House
Suite 1002, Level 1
29-57 Station Street, Penrith 2750
PO Box 4303, Penrith Westfield 2750

Phone: (02) 4777 8000

Fax: (02) 4777 8099

Email: admin@wentworth.org.au

Opening hours:

8:30am-4:30pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri
1:00pm-4:30pm Wed

Branches

Hawkesbury

Address: 409A George Street
South Windsor

Phone: (02) 4777 8000

Opening Hours: 8:30am-4:30pm
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri (closed Wed)

Blue Mountains

Address: Level 2, 98 Bathurst Road
Katoomba

Phone: (02) 4777 8000

Opening Hours: 8:30am-4:30pm
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri (closed Wed)

Lithgow

Address: 42 Main St
Lithgow

Phone: (02) 6353 1184

Opening Hours: 11:00am-3:00pm
Tues, Wed, Fri (closed Mon, Thurs)

Connect with Wentworth on Social Media



Interested in what's happening in your community, Wentworth and the housing sector? Connecting with us has never been easier.

If you are interested in finding out the latest news, job ads or up to date information from Wentworth, please like the Facebook Page today.

 www.facebook.com/WentworthCommunityHousing

Or connect on

 **Twitter** | @Wentworth_CH

 **Instagram** | wentworthcommunityhousing

 **LinkedIn** | Wentworth Community Housing



Next WNEWS

Our next edition of WNEWS will be out in December 2020 and will be mailed and displayed on Wentworth's Website www.wentworth.org.au/tenants/tenant-newsletter

If you would like to see an article on a specific topic please email admin@wentworth.org.au